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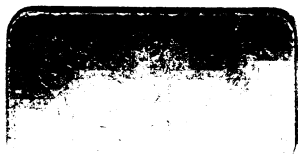
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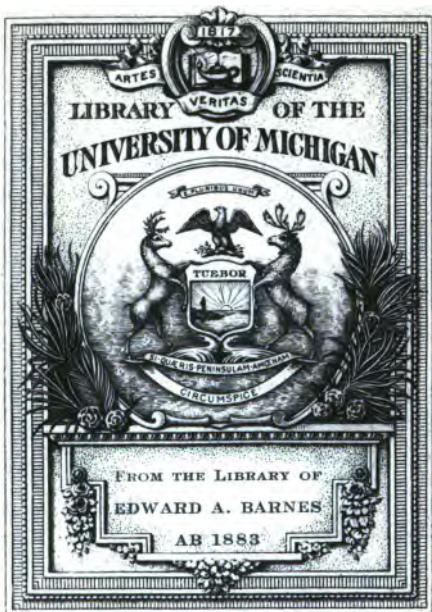
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THE GIFT OF

MRS. BARNARD PIERCE  
MRS. CARL HAESSLER  
MRS. HOWARD LUCE  
MISS MARGARET KNIGHT





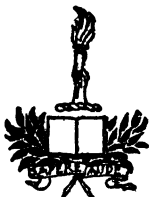
**MEN**  
*and*  
**Women**

**H.M. Caldwell Co**  
**New York — Boston.**





# **MEN** *and* **Women**



*Robert  
Browning*

**H.M. Caldwell Co.**  
**New York and Boston.**

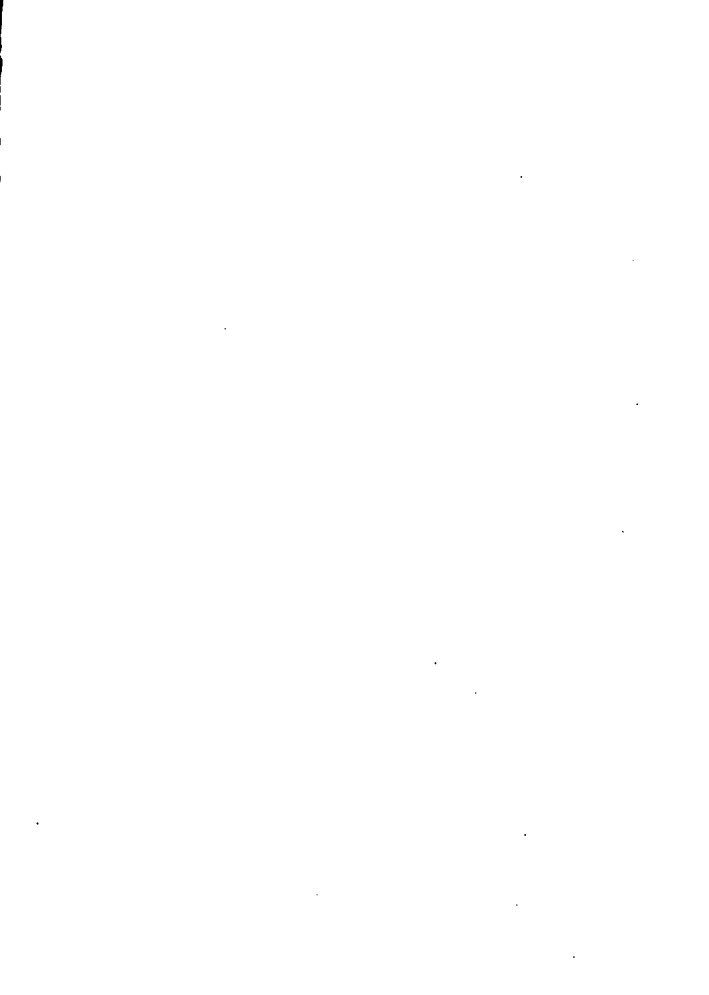


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# Men and Women

## YOUTH AND ART

### I.

It once might have been, once only :  
We lodged in a street together,  
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,  
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

### II.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,  
You thumbed, thrust, patted, and  
polished,  
Then laughed, "They will see, some  
day,  
Smith made, and Gibson demol-  
ished."

## **\* Men and Women**

### **III.**

**My business was song, song, song :  
I chirped, cheeped, trilled, and twit-  
tered,  
“ Kate Brown’s on the boards ere long,  
And Grisi’s existence embittered ! ”**

### **IV.**

**I earned no more by a warble  
Than you by a sketch in plaster :  
You wanted a piece of marble,  
I needed a music-master.**

### **V.**

**We studied hard in our styles,  
Chipped each a crust like Hindoos,  
For air, looked out on the tiles,  
For fun, watched each other’s win-  
dows.**

## Men and Women ❄

### VI.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,  
Cap and blouse — nay, a bit of  
beard too ;  
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth  
With fingers the clay adhered to.

### VII.

And I — soon managed to find  
Weak points in the flower-fence  
facing,  
Was forced to put up a blind  
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

### VIII.

No harm ! It was not my fault  
If you never turned your eye's tail up  
As I shook upon E *in alt.*,  
Or ran the chromatic scale up ;

## **\* Men and Women**

### **IX.**

For spring bade the sparrows pair,  
And the boys and girls gave guesses,  
And stalls in our street looked rare  
With bulrush and watercresses.

### **X.**

Why did you not pinch a flower  
In a pellet of clay and fling it?  
Why did not I put a power  
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

### **XI.**

I did look, sharp as a lynx  
(And yet the memory rankles),  
When models arrived, some minx  
Tripped up stairs, she and her  
ankles.



## Men and Women ❀

### XII.

But I think I gave you as good !

“ That foreign fellow, — who can  
know

How she pays, in a playful mood,  
For his tuning her that piano ? ”

### XIII.

Could you say so, and never say,

“ Suppose we join hands and for-  
tunes,

And I fetch her from over the way,  
Her, piano, and long tunes and short  
tunes ? ”

### XIV.

No, no ; you would not be rash,

Nor I rasher and something over :

You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,  
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

## ✱ Men and Women

### XV.

But you meet the Prince at the Board,  
I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,  
I've married a rich old lord,  
And you're dubbed knight and an  
R. A.

### XVI.

Each life's unfulfilled, you see ;  
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy :  
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,  
Starved, feasted, despaired, — been  
happy.

### XVII.

And nobody calls you a dunce,  
And people suppose me clever :  
This could but have happened once,  
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

# GOLD HAIR

## A STORY OF PORNIC

### I.

OH, the beautiful girl, too white,  
Who lived at Pornic down by the  
sea.

Just where the sea and the Loire unite !  
And a boasted name in Brittany  
She bore, which I will not write.

### II.

Too white, for the flower of life is red ;  
Her flesh was the soft seraphic screen  
Of a soul that is meant (her parents  
said)

To just see earth, and hardly be seen,  
And blossom in heaven instead.

## **\* Men and Women**

### **III.**

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair !  
One grace that grew to its full on  
earth :  
Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so  
spare,  
And her waist want half a girdle's  
girth,  
But she had her great gold hair.

### **IV.**

Hair, such a wonder of flax and floss,  
Freshness and fragrance — floods of  
it too !  
Gold, did I say ? Nay, gold's mere  
dross :  
Here, Life smiled, "Think what I  
meant to do !"  
And Love sighed, "Fancy my loss !"

## Men and Women ❄

### V.

So, when she died, it was scarce more  
    strange  
    Than that, when some delicate even-  
    ing dies,  
And you follow its spent sun's pallid  
    range,  
    There's a shoot of colour startles  
    the skies  
With a sudden, violent change, —

### VI.

That, while the breath was nearly to  
    seek,  
    As they put the little cross to her lips,  
She changed ; a spot came out on her  
    cheek,  
    A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,  
And she broke forth, " I must speak !

## **\* Men and Women**

### **VII.**

**“Not my hair!” made the girl her  
moan —**

**“All the rest is gone or to go ;  
But the last, last grace, my all, my  
own,**

**Let it stay in the grave, that the  
ghosts may know !  
Leave my poor gold hair alone !”**

### **VIII.**

**The passions thus vented, dead lay she :  
Her parents sobbed their worst on  
that,**

**All friends joined in, nor observed de-  
gree :**

**For indeed the hair was to wonder  
at,  
As it spread — not flowing free,**

## Men and Women ❀

### IX.

But curled around her brow, like a  
crown,  
And coiled beside her cheeks, like  
a cap,  
And calmed about her neck — ay,  
down  
To her breast, pressed flat, without a  
gap  
I' the gold, it reached her gown.

### X.

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge  
'Mid the yellow wealth, nor dis-  
turbed its hair:  
E'en the priest allowed death's privi-  
lege,  
As he planted the crucifix with care  
On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

**XI.**

And thus was she buried, inviolate  
Of body and soul, in the very  
space o'  
By the altar; keeping saintly state  
In Pornic church, for her pride of  
race,  
Pure life and piteous fate.

**XII.**

And in after-time would your fresh  
tear fall,  
Though your mouth might twitch  
with a dubious smile,  
As they told you of gold both robe  
and pall,  
How she prayed them leave it alone  
awhile,  
So it never was touched at all.



## Men and Women ❀

### XIII.

Years flew ; this legend grew at last  
Th life of the lady ; all she had  
d ne,  
All been, in the memories fading fast  
Of lover and friend, was summoned  
in one  
Sentence survivors passed :

### XIV.

To wit, she was meant for heaven,  
not earth ;  
Had turned an angel before the  
time :  
Yet, since she was mortal, in such  
dearth  
Of frailty, all you could count a  
crime  
Was — she knew her gold hair's worth.

## **\* Men and Women**

### **XV.**

A little pleasant Pornic church,  
It chanced, the pavement wanted  
repair,  
Was taken to pieces; left in the  
lurch,  
A certain sacred space lay bare,  
And the boys began research.

### **XVI.**

'Twas the space where our sires would  
lay a saint,  
A benefactor, — a bishop, suppose,  
A baron with armour - adornments  
quaint,  
Dame with chased ring and jewelled  
rose,  
Things sanctity saves from taint;

## Men and Women ❀

### XVII.

So we come to find them in after-days,  
When the corpse is presumed to  
have done with gauds,  
Of use to the living, in many ways :  
For the boys get pelf, and the town  
applauds,  
And the church deserves the praise.

### XVIII.

They grubbed with a will : and at  
length — *O cor*  
*Humanum, pectora cæca*, and the  
rest ! —  
They found — no gaud they were  
prying for,  
No ring, no rose, but — who would  
have guessed ? —  
A double Louis-d'or !

## **\* Men and Women**

### **XIX.**

Here was a case for the priest : he  
heard,  
Marked, inwardly digested, laid  
Finger on nose, smiled, " A little bird  
Chirps in my ear : " then, " Bring a  
spade,  
Dig deeper ! " — he gave the word.

### **XX.**

And lo, when they came to the coffin-  
lid,  
Or rotten planks which composed it  
once,  
Why, there lay the girl's skull wedged  
amid  
A mint of money, it served for the  
nonce  
To hold in its hair-heaps hid !

## Men and Women ❄

### XXI.

Hid there? Why? Could the girl  
be wont

(She the stainless soul) to treasure up  
Money, earth's trash and heaven's affront?

Had a spider found out the communion-cup,  
Was a toad in the christening-font?

### XXII.

Truth is truth: too true it was.

Gold! She hoarded and hugged it  
first,  
Longed for it, leaned o'er it, loved it  
— alas —

Till the humour grew to a head and  
burst,  
And she cried, at the final pass, —

## **\* Men and Women**

### **XXIII.**

**"Talk not of God, my heart is  
stone !  
Nor lover nor friend — be gold for  
both !  
Gold I lack ; and, my all, my own,  
It shall hide in my hair. I scarce  
die loth  
If they let my hair alone ! "**

### **XXIV.**

**Louis-d'ors, some six times five,  
And duly double, every piece.  
Now, do you see ? With the priest  
to shrive,  
With parents preventing her soul's  
release  
By kisses that kept alive, —**

## Men and Women ❀

### XXV.

With heaven's gold gates about to ope,  
With friends' praise, gold-like, lingering still,  
An instinct had bidden the girl's hand  
grope  
For gold, the true sort — "Gold in  
heaven, if you will ;  
But I keep earth's too, I hope."

### XXVI.

Enough ! The priest took the grave's  
grim yield :  
The parents, they eyed that price of  
sin  
As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed  
On the place to *bury strangers in*,  
The hideous Potter's Field.

## **\* Men and Women**

### **XXVII.**

**But the priest bethought him : “ ‘ Milk  
that’s spilt ’**

**— You know the adage ! Watch  
and pray !**

**Saints tumble to earth with so slight  
a tilt !**

**It would build a new altar ; that, we  
may ! ”**

**And the altar therewith was built.**

### **XXVIII.**

**Why I deliver this horrible verse ?**

**As the text of a sermon, which now  
I preach.**

**Evil or good may be better or worse**

**In the human heart, but the mixture  
of each**

**Is a marvel and a curse.**



## Men and Women ❄

### XXIX.

The candid incline to surmise of late  
That the Christian faith may be  
false, I find ;  
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate  
Begins to tell on the public mind,  
And Colenso's words have weight :

### XXX.

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,  
See reasons and reasons ; this, to  
begin ;  
'Tis the faith that launched point-  
blank her dart  
At the head of a lie — taught Orig-  
inal Sin,  
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

## THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon, and night,  
"Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,  
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard as he laboured, long and well:  
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,  
He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"

Then back again his curls he threw,  
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well  
done;  
I doubt not thou art heard, my son,

## Men and Women ❀

“As well as if thy voice to-day  
Were praising God, the Pope’s great  
way.

“This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome  
Praises God from Peter’s dome.”

Said Theocrite, “Would God that I  
Might praise him that great way, and  
die !”

Night passed, day shone ;  
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway :  
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, “Nor day nor  
night  
Now brings the voice of my delight.”

## **\* \* Men and Women**

**Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,  
Spread his wings and sank to earth :**

**Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,  
Lived there, and played the craftsman  
well ;**

**And morning, evening, noon, and night  
Praised God in place of Theocrite.**

**And from a boy, to youth he grew :  
The man put off the stripling's hue ;**

**The man matured and fell away  
Into the season of decay ;**

**And ever o'er the trade he bent,  
And ever lived on earth content.**

**(He did God's will, to him all one  
If on the earth or in the sun.)**

## Men and Women ❀

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;  
There is no doubt in it, no fear!

"So sing old worlds, and so  
New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways;  
I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off  
fell  
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,  
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by  
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,  
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

## **\* Men and Women**

---

**And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,**

**Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,  
Till on his life the sickness weighed;**

**And in his cell, when death drew near,  
An angel in a dream brought cheer :**

**And rising from the sickness drear  
He grew a priest, and now stood here.**

**To the East with praise he turned,  
And on his sight the angel burned.**

**"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,  
And set thee here; I did not well.**

**"Vainly I left my angel-sphere,  
Vain was thy dream for many a year.**

## Men and Women ❀

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak : it  
dropped —

Creation's chorus stopped !

"Go back and praise again  
The early way, while I remain.

"With that weak voice of our disdain  
Take up creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ :  
Resume the craftsman and the boy !"

Theocrite grew old at home :  
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died :  
They sought God side by side.

# LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

[*A Shepherd speaks*]

## I.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of even-  
ing smiles

Miles and miles

On the solitary pastures where our  
sheep

Half-asleep

Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight,  
stray or stop

As they crop —

## II.

Was the site once of a city great and  
gay,

(So they say)



## Men and Women ❀

Of our country's very capital, its prince  
Ages since  
Held his court in, gathered councils,  
wielding far  
Peace or war.

### III.

Now — the country does not even  
boast a tree,  
As you see,  
To distinguish slopes of verdure, cer-  
tain rills  
From the hills  
Intersect and give a name to (else they  
run  
Into one).

### IV.

Where the domed and daring palace  
shot its spires  
Up like fires

## **\* Men and Women**

---

O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall  
    Bounding all,  
Made of marble, men might march on  
    nor be prest,  
    Twelve abreast.

### **v.**

And such plenty and perfection, see, of  
    grass  
    Never was !  
Such a carpet as, this summer-time,  
    o'erspreads  
    And embeds  
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
    Stock or stone —

### **vi.**

Where a multitude of men breathed  
    joy and woe  
    Long ago ;

## Men and Women ❀

Lust of glory pricked their hearts up,  
dread of shame

Struck them tame ;

And that glory and that shame alike,  
the gold

Bought and sold.

### VII.

Now,—the single little turret that  
remains

On the plains,

By the caper overrooted, by the gourd

Overscored,

While the patching houseleek's head  
of blossom winks

Through the chinks —

### VIII.

Marks the basement whence a tower  
in ancient time

Sprang sublime,

## **\* Men and Women**

---

And a burning ring all round, the  
    chariots traced,  
    As they raced,  
And the monarch and his minions and  
    his dames  
    Viewed the games.

### **IX.**

And I know, while thus the quiet-col-  
    oured eve  
    Smiles to leave  
To their folding all our many-tinkling  
    fleece  
    In such peace,  
And the slopes and rills in undistin-  
    guished gray  
    Melt away —

## Men and Women ❀

X.

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow  
hair

Waits me there

In the turret, whence the charioteers  
caught soul

For the goal,

When the king looked, where she  
looks now, breathless, dumb

Till I come.

XL

But he looked upon the city, every  
side,

Far and wide,

All the mountains topped with temples,  
all the glades'

Colonnades,

## **\* Men and Women**

**All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts, —  
and then,  
All the men !**

### **XII.**

**When I do come, she will speak not,  
she will stand,  
Either hand  
On my shoulder, give her eyes the  
first embrace  
Of my face,  
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight  
and speech  
Each on each.**

### **XIII.**

**In one year they sent a million fighters  
forth  
South and north,**

## Men and Women ❀

And they built their gods a brazen pil-  
lar high  
    As the sky,  
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in  
full force —  
    Gold, of course.

### XIV.

Oh, heart! oh, blood that freezes,  
blood that burns!  
    Earth's returns  
For whole centuries of folly, noise and  
sin!  
    Shut them in,  
With their triumphs and their glories  
and the rest.  
    Love is best!

## EVELYN HOPE

*[A Man, aged about fifty, speaks]*

### I.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead !  
Sit and watch by her side an hour.  
That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;  
She plucked that piece of geranium-  
flower,  
Beginning to die too, in the glass.  
Little has yet been changed, I think —  
The shutters are shut, no light may pass  
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's  
chink.

### II.

Sixteen years old when she died !  
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my  
name —



## Men and Women ❀

It was not her time to love : beside,  
Her life had many a hope and aim,  
Duties enough and little cares,  
And now was quiet, now astir —  
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,  
And the sweet white brow is all of  
her.

### III.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?  
What, your soul was pure and true,  
The good stars met in your horoscope,  
Made you of spirit, fire and dew —  
And just because I was thrice as old,  
And our paths in the world diverged  
so wide,  
Each was nought to each, must I be  
told ?  
We were fellow mortals, nought  
beside ?

## ✱ Men and Women

### IV.

No, indeed ! for God above  
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
And creates the love to reward the  
love, —  
I claim you still, for my own love's  
sake !  
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,  
Through worlds I shall traverse, not  
a few —  
Much is to learn and much to forget  
Ere the time be come for taking  
you.

### V.

But the time will come, — at last it  
will,  
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I  
shall say,

## Men and Women ❀

In the lower earth, in the years long  
still,  
That body and soul so pure and  
gay?  
Why your hair was amber, I shall  
divine,  
And your mouth of your own gera-  
nium's red —  
And what you would do with me, in  
fine,  
In the new life come in the old one's  
stead.

### VI.

I have lived, I shall say, so much since  
then,  
Given up myself so many times,  
Gained me the gains of various men,  
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the  
climes;

## **✻ Men and Women**

**Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,  
Either I missed or itself missed me —  
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !  
What is the issue ? let us see !**

### **VII.**

**I loved you, Evelyn, all the while ;  
My heart seemed full as it could  
hold —  
There was place and to spare for the  
frank young smile  
And the red young mouth and the  
hair's young gold.  
So, hush, — I will give you this leaf  
to keep —  
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold  
hand.  
There, that is our secret ! go to sleep ;  
You will wake, and remember, and  
understand.**

## A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

*[Spoken to the Man of her choice]*

### I.

LET's contend no more, Love,  
Strive nor weep —  
All be as before, Love,  
— Only sleep !

### II.

What so wild as words are ?  
— I and thou  
In debate, as birds are,  
Hawk on bough !

### III.

See the creature stalking  
While we speak —

## **\* Men and Women**

---

**Hush and hide the talking,  
Check on cheek !**

### **IV.**

**What so false as truth is,  
False to thee ?  
Where the serpent's tooth is,  
Shun the tree —**

### **V.**

**Where the apple reddens  
Never pry —  
Lest we lose our Edens,  
Eve and I !**

### **VI.**

**Be a god and hold me  
With a charm —**

## Men and Women ❀

Be a man and fold me  
With thine arm !

### VII.

Teach me, only teach, Love !  
As I ought  
I will speak thy speech, Love,  
Think thy thought —

### VIII.

Meet, if thou require it,  
Both demands,  
Laying flesh and spirit  
In thy hands !

### IX.

That shall be to-morrow,  
Not to-night :  
I must bury sorrow  
Out of sight.

## **\* Men and Women**

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**x.**

— Must a little weep, Love,  
— Foolish me !  
And so fall asleep, Love,  
Loved by thee.



## A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

*[The Poet interprets the Music]*

### I.

OH, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very  
sad to find !

I can hardly misconceive you ; it would  
prove me deaf and blind ;

But although I give you credit, 'tis  
with such a heavy mind !

### II.

Here you come with your old music,  
and here's all the good it brings.

What, they lived once thus at Venice,  
where the merchants were the  
kings,

Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges  
used to wed the sea with rings ?

## **\* Men and Women**

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### **III.**

**Ay, because the sea's the street there ;  
and 'tis arched by . . . what you  
call**

**. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on  
it, where they kept the carni-  
val !**

**I was never out of England — it's as  
if I saw it all !**

### **IV.**

**Did young people take their pleasure  
when the sea was warm in  
May ?**

**Balls and masques begun at midnight,  
burning ever to midday,**

**When they made up fresh adventures  
for the morrow, do you say ?**

## Men and Women ❀

### V.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so  
round and lips so red, —  
On her neck the small face buoyant,  
like a bell-flower on its bed,  
O'er the breast's superb abundance  
where a man might base his  
head ?

### VI.

Well (and it was graceful of them)  
they'd break talk off and afford  
— She, to bite her mask's black velvet,  
he to finger on his sword,  
While you sat and played Toccatas,  
stately at the clavichord ?

### VII.

What? Those lesser thirds so plain-  
tive, sixths diminished, sigh on  
sigh,

## ✱ Men and Women

Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions — “Must we die?”

Those commiserating sevenths —  
“Life might last! we can but try!”

### VIII.

“Were you happy?” — “Yes.” —  
“And are you still as happy?”  
— “Yes — And you?”

— “Then more kisses” — “Did I stop them, when a million seemed so few?”

Hark — the dominant’s persistence, till it must be answered to!

### IX.

So an octave struck the answer. Oh,  
they praised you, I dare say!

## Men and Women ❀

“Brave Galuppi! that was music!  
good alike at grave and gay!  
I can always leave off talking, when I  
hear a master play.”

### X.

Then they left you for their pleasure:  
till in due time, one by one,  
Some with lives that came to nothing,  
some with deeds as well undone,  
Death came tacitly and took them  
where they never see the sun.

### XL

But when I sit down to reason,—  
think to take my hand nor swerve  
Till I triumph o'er a secret wrung from  
nature's close reserve,  
In you come with your cold music, till  
I creep thro' every nerve.

## ✱ Men and Women

### XII.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creak-  
ing where a house was burned —  
“Dust and ashes, dead and done with  
Venice spent what Venice earned !  
The soul, doubtless, is immortal —  
where a soul can be discerned.

### XIII.

“Yours for instance, you know physics,  
something of geology,  
Mathematics are your pastime ; souls  
shall rise in their degree ;  
Butterflies may dread extinction, —  
you'll not die, it cannot be !

### XIV.

“As for Venice and its people, merely  
born to bloom and drop,

## Men and Women ❀

Here on earth they bore their fruitage,  
mirth and folly were the crop.  
What of soul was left, I wonder, when  
the kissing had to stop?

### xv.

“Dust and ashes!” So you creak it,  
and I want the heart to scold:  
Dear dead women, with such hair, too  
— what’s become of all the gold  
Used to hang and brush their bosoms?  
I feel chilly and grown old.

# ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

[*A Dramatic Lyric*]

I.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou  
Who art all truth and who dost love  
me now

As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks  
to say —

Should'st love so truly and could'st love  
me still

A whole long life through, had but love  
its will,

Would death that leads me from  
thee brook delay.



## Men and Women ❀

### II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand  
Would never let mine go, thy heart  
withstand

The beating of my heart to reach its  
place.

When should I look for thee and feel  
thee gone ?

When cry for the old comfort and find  
none ?

Never, I know ! Thy soul is in thy  
face.

### III.

Oh, I should fade — 'tis willed so !  
might I save,

Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave  
Joy to thy sense, for that was pre-  
cious too.

It is not to be granted. But the soul

## \* Men and Women

Whence the love comes, all ravage  
leaves that whole ;  
Vainly the flesh fades — soul makes  
all things new.

### IV.

And 'twould not be because my eye  
grew dim  
Thou couldst not find the love there,  
thanks to Him  
Who never is dishonoured in the  
spark  
He gave us from his fire of fires, and  
bade  
Remember whence it sprang nor be  
afraid  
While that burns on, though all the  
rest grow dark.

## Men and Women ❄

### V.

So, how thou would'st be perfect, white  
and clean

Outside as inside, soul and soul's de-  
mesne

Alike, this body given to show it  
by !

Oh, three-parts through the worst of  
life's abyss,

What plaudits from the next world  
after this,

Couldst thou repeat a stroke and  
gain the sky !

### VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think  
That, disengage our hands and thou  
wilt sink,

Although thy love was love in very  
deed ?

## **\* Men and Women**

---

**I know that nature! Pass a festive  
day,  
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower  
away  
Nor bid its music's loitering echo  
speed.**

### **VII.**

**Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie  
where it fell ;  
If old things remain old things all is  
well,  
For thou art grateful as becomes  
man best :  
And hadst thou only heard me play  
one tune,  
Or viewed me from a window, not so  
soon  
With thee would such things fade as  
with the rest.**

## Men and Women ❄

### VIII.

I seem to see ! we meet and part : 'tis  
brief :

The book I opened keeps a folded  
leaf,

The very chair I sat on breaks the  
rank ;

That is a portrait of me on the wall —  
Three lines, my face comes at so slight  
a call ;

And for all this, one little hour's to  
thank.

### IX.

But now, because the hour through  
years was fixed,

Because our inmost beings met and  
mixed,

Because thou once hast loved me —  
wilt thou dare

## **\* Men and Women**

Say to thy soul and Who may list  
beside,  
“ Therefore she is immortally my  
bride,  
Chance cannot change that love, nor  
time impair.

### **X.**

“ So, what if in the dusk of life that’s  
left,  
I, a tired traveller, of my sun bereft,  
Look from my path when, mimick-  
ing the same,  
The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and  
gone ?  
— Where was it till the sunset ? where  
anon  
It will be at the sunrise ! what’s to  
blame ? ”

## Men and Women ❀

### XI.

Is it so helpful to thee ? canst thou take  
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's  
sake,

Put gently by such efforts at a beam ?  
Is the remainder of the way so long  
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the  
strong ?

Watch out thy watch, let weak ones  
doze and dream !

### XII.

“ — Ah, but the fresher faces ! Is it  
true,”

Thou'lt ask, “ some eyes are beautiful  
and new ?

Some hair, — how can one choose  
but grasp such wealth ?  
And if a man would press his lips to  
lips

## **✻ Men and Women**

**Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup  
there slips  
The dew-drop out of, must it be by  
stealth ?**

### **XIII.**

**“It cannot change the love kept still  
for Her,  
Much more than, such a picture to  
prefer  
Passing a day with, to a room’s bare  
side.  
The painted form takes nothing she  
possessed,  
Yet while the Titian’s Venus lies at  
rest  
A man looks. Once more, what is  
there to chide ?”**



## Men and Women ❄

### XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and  
watch,

My own self sell myself, my hand  
attach

Its warrant to the very thefts from  
me —

Thy singleness of soul that made me  
proud,

Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,

Thy man's truth I was bold to bid  
God see !

### XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt ! Give all  
thou canst

Away to the new faces — disen-  
tranced —

(Say it and think it) obdurate no  
more,

## **\* Men and Women**

**Re-issue looks and words from the old  
mint —**

**Pass them afresh, no matter whose the  
print**

**Image and superscription once they  
bore !**

### **XVI.**

**Re-coin thyself and give it them to  
spend, —**

**It all comes to the same thing at the  
end,**

**Since mine thou wast, mine art, and  
mine shalt be,**

**Faithful or faithless, sealing up the  
sum**

**Or lavish of my treasure, thou must  
come**

**Back to the heart's place here I keep  
for thee !**

## Men and Women ❀

### XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at  
all ?

Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of  
coronal,

Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow ?  
Why need the other women know so  
much

And talk together, "Such the look and  
such

The smile he used to love with, then  
as now ! "

### XVIII.

Might I die last and show thee ! Should  
I find

Such hardship in the few years left  
behind,

If free to take and light my lamp,  
and go

## **\* Men and Women**

Into thy tomb, and shut the door and  
sit

Seeing thy face on those four sides  
of it

The better that they are so blank, I  
know !

### **XIX.**

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn  
o'er

Within my mind each look, get more  
and more

By heart each word, too much to  
learn at first,

And join thee all the fitter for the pause  
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That  
were cause

For lingering, though thou calledst,  
if I durst !

## Men and Women ❀

### XX.

And yet thou art the nobler of us  
two.

What dare I dream of, that thou canst  
not do,

Outstripping my ten small steps with  
one stride?

I'll say then, here's a trial and a task —  
Is it to bear? — if easy, I'll not ask —

Though love fail, I can trust on in  
thy pride.

### XXI.

Pride? — when those eyes forestall the  
life behind

The death I have to go through! —  
when I find,

Now that I want thy help most, all  
of thee!

## ✱ Men and Women

What did I fear? Thy love shall hold  
me fast

Until the little minute's sleep is past  
And I wake saved. — And yet, it  
will not be!

## THE STATUE AND THE BUST

[*A Dramatic Romance*]

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the  
world knows well,  
And a statue watches it from the square,  
And this story of both do the towns-  
men tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,  
At the farthest window facing the east,  
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal  
air?"

The bridesmaids' prattle around her  
ceased;  
She leaned forth, one on either hand;  
They saw how the blush of the bride  
increased —

## **\* Men and Women**

**They felt by its beats her heart expand —**

**As one at each ear and both in a breath**

**Whispered, “The Great-Duke Ferdinand.”**

**That selfsame instant, underneath,  
The Duke rode past in his idle way,  
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.**

**Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,  
Till he threw his head back — “Who  
is she ? ” —**

**“A Bride the Riccardi brings home  
to-day.”**

**Hair in heaps laid heavily  
Over a pale brow spirit-pure —  
Carved like the heart of the coal-black  
tree,**



## Men and Women ❀

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure —  
Which vainly sought to dissemble her  
    eyes  
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise  
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man, —  
The Duke grew straightway brave and  
    wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;  
She looked at him, as one who  
    awakes, —  
The past was a sleep, and her life  
    began.

As love so ordered for both their  
    sakes,  
A feast was held that selfsame night  
In the pile which the mighty shadow  
    makes.

## **\* Men and Women**

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,  
But the Palace overshadows one,  
Because of a crime which may God  
requite !

To Florence and God the wrong was  
done,  
Through the first republic's murder  
there  
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the  
square)  
Turned in the midst of his multitude  
At the bright approach of the bridal  
pair.

Face to face the lovers stood  
A single minute and no more,  
While the bridegroom bent as a man  
subdued —

## Men and Women ❀

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the  
floor —

For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,  
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a  
word?

If a word did pass, which I do not  
think,

Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's  
brink

He and his bride were alone at last  
In a bedchamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,  
That the door she had passed was shut  
on her

Till the final catafalque repassed.

## **✻ Men and Women**

The world meanwhile, its noise and  
stir,  
Through a certain window facing the  
east  
She might watch like a convent's  
chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a  
feast,  
And a feast might lead to so much  
beside,  
He, of many evils, chose the least.

“Freely I choose too,” said the bride —  
“Your window and its world suffice.”  
So replied the tongue, while the heart  
replied —

“If I spend the night with that devil  
twice,

## Men and Women ❄

May his window serve as my loop of  
hell

Whence a damned soul looks on  
Paradise !

“I fly to the Duke who loves me  
well,

Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow  
Ere I count another ave-bell.

“’Tis only the coat of a page to  
borrow,

And tie my hair in a horse-boy’s trim,  
And I save my soul — but not to-  
morrow” —

(She checked herself and her eye grew  
dim) —

“My father tarries to bless my state :  
I must keep it one day more for him.

## ✱ Men and Women

“Is one day more so long to wait?  
Moreover the Duke rides past, I  
know —

We shall see each other, sure as fate.”

She turned on her side and slept. Just  
so!

So we resolve on a thing and sleep.  
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, “Dear or  
cheap

As the cost of this cup of bliss may  
prove

To body or soul, I will drain it deep.”

And on the morrow, bold with love,  
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on  
call,

As his duty bade, by the Duke’s  
alcove)

## Men and Women ❀

And smiled “ ’Twas a very funeral  
Your lady will think, this feast of  
ours, —

A shame to efface, whate’er befall !

“ What if we break from the Arno  
bowers,

And let Petraja, cool and green,  
Cure last night’s fault with this morn-  
ing’s flowers ? ”

The bridegroom, not a thought to be  
seen

On his steady brow and quiet mouth,  
Said, “ Too much favour for me so  
mean !

“ Alas ! my lady leaves the south.  
Each wind that comes from the Apen-  
nine

Is a menace to her tender youth.

## **\* Men and Women**

**“No way exists, the wise opine,  
If she quits her palace twice this  
year,  
To avert the flower of life’s decline.”**

**Quoth the Duke, “A sage and a kindly  
fear.  
Moreover, Petraja is cold this spring —  
Be our feast to-night as usual here !”**

**And then to himself — “Which night  
shall bring  
Thy bride to her lover’s embraces,  
fool —  
Or I am the fool, and thou art his  
king !**

**“Yet my passion must wait a night,  
nor cool —**



## Men and Women ❀

For to-night the Envoy arrives from  
France,  
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my  
tool.

“I need thee still and might miss per-  
chance.

To-day is not wholly lost, beside,  
With its hope of my lady's counte-  
nance —

“For I ride—what should I do but ride?  
And passing her palace, if I list,  
May glance at its window—well be-  
tide!”

So said, so done : nor the lady missed  
One ray that broke from the ardent  
brow,  
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit  
kissed.

## \* Men and Women

Be sure that each renewed the vow,  
No morrow's sun should arise and set  
And leave them then as it left them  
now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,  
With still fresh cause to wait one  
more

Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,  
With a gentle start, half smile, half  
sigh,

They found love not as it seemed be-  
fore.

They thought it would work infallibly,  
But not in despite of heaven and  
earth —

The rose would blow when the storm  
passed by.

• Men and Women ❄

Meantime they could profit in winter's  
dearth

By winter's fruits that supplant the  
rose :

The world and its ways have a certain  
worth !

And to press a point while these oppose  
Were a simple policy — best wait,  
And lose no friends and gain no foes.

Meanwhile, worse fates than a lover's  
fate,

Who daily may ride and lean and look  
Where his lady watches behind the  
grate !

And she — she watched the square like  
a book

Holding one picture and only one,  
Which daily to find she undertook.

## **\* Men and Women**

When the picture was reached the  
book was done,  
And she turned from it all night to  
scheme  
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

Weeks grew months, years — gleam  
by gleam  
The glory dropped from youth and  
love,  
And both perceived they had dreamed  
a dream,

Which hovered as dreams do, still  
above, —  
But who can take a dream for  
truth?  
Oh, hide our eyes from the next re-  
move!

## Men and Women ❀

One day as the lady saw her youth  
Depart, and the silver thread that  
    streaked  
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's  
    tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so  
    peaked, —  
And wondered who the woman was,  
So hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass —  
“Summon here,” she suddenly said,  
“Before the rest of my old self pass,

“Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,  
Who moulds the clay no love will  
    change,  
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

## ✱ Men and Women

“ Let Robbia’s craft so apt and strange  
Arrest the remains of young and fair,  
And rivet them while the seasons  
range.

“ Make me a face on the window there  
Waiting as ever, mute the while,  
My love to pass below in the square !

“ And let me think that it may beguile  
Dreary days which the dead must  
spend  
Down in their darkness under the  
aisle —

“ To say, — ‘ What matters at the  
end ?  
I did no more while my heart was  
warm,  
Than does that image, my pale-faced  
friend.’

## Men and Women ❄

“Where is the use of the lip’s red  
charm,  
The heaven of hair, the pride of the  
brow,  
And the blood that blues the inside  
arm —

“Unless we turn, as the soul knows  
how,  
The earthly gift to an end divine?  
A lady of clay is as good, I trow.”

But long ere Robbia’s cornice, fine  
With flowers and fruits which leaves  
enlace,  
Was set where now is the empty  
shrine —

(With, leaning out of a bright blue  
space,  
As a ghost might from a chink of sky,  
The passionate pale lady’s face —

## **\* Men and Women**

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Eyeing ever with earnest eye  
And quick-turned neck at its breathless  
stretch,  
Some one who ever passes by —)

The Duke sighed like the simplest  
wretch  
In Florence, “So, my dream escapes!  
Will its record stay?” And he bade  
them fetch

Some subtle fashioner of shapes —  
“Can the soul, the will, die out of a  
man  
Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

“John of Douay shall work my plan,  
Mould me on horseback here aloft,  
Alive — (the subtle artisan !)



## Men and Women ❀

“In the very square I cross so oft!  
That men may admire, when future  
    suns  
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

“While the mouth and the brow are  
    brave in bronze —  
Admire and say, ‘When he was alive,  
How he would take his pleasure once!’

“And it shall go hard but I contrive  
To listen meanwhile and laugh in my  
    tomb  
At indolence which aspires to strive.”

. . . . .

So! while these wait the trump of  
    doom,  
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,  
Nights and days in the narrow room?

## **\* Men and Women**

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder  
What a gift life was, ages ago,  
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Surely they see not God, I know,  
Nor all that chivalry of His,  
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of  
bliss —  
Since, the end of life being manifest,  
He had cut his way thro' the world to  
this.

I hear your reproach — “But delay  
was best,  
For their end was a crime!” — Oh, a  
crime will do  
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

## Men and Women ❄

As a virtue golden through and through,  
Sufficient to vindicate itself  
And prove its worth at a moment's  
view.

Must a game be played for the sake of  
pelf ?

Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram  
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the  
sham.

As well the counter as coin, I submit,  
When your table's a hat, and your  
prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every  
whit,

Venture as truly, use the same skill,  
Do your best, whether winning or  
losing it,

## ✻ Men and Women

If you choose to play — is my principle !

Let a man contend to the uttermost  
For his life's set prize, be it what it  
will !

The counter our lovers staked was  
lost

As surely as if it were lawful coin :  
And the sin I impute to each frustrate  
ghost

Was, the unlit lamp and the ungirt  
loin,  
Though the end in sight was a crime,  
I say.

You of the virtue (we issue join)  
How strive you ? *De te, fabula !*

# THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

[*A Dramatic Romance*]

## I.

I SAID — Then, dearest, since 'tis so,  
Since now at length my fate I know,  
Since nothing all my love avails,  
Since all my life seemed meant for, fails,  
    Since this was written and needs  
        must be —

My whole heart rises up to bless  
Your name in pride and thankfulness !  
Take back the hope you gave, — I  
    claim

Only a memory of the same,  
— And this beside, if you will not blame,  
    Your leave for one more last ride  
        with me.

## **✻ Men and Women**

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### **II.**

**My mistress bent that brow of hers,  
Those deep dark eyes where pride  
demurs**

**When pity would be softening through,  
Fixed me a breathing-while or two  
With life or death in the balance —  
Right !**

**The blood replenished me again :  
My last thought was at least not vain.  
I and my mistress, side by side  
Shall be together, breathe and ride,  
So one day more am I deified.  
Who knows but the world may end  
to-night ?**

### **III.**

**Hush ! if you saw some western  
cloud  
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed**

## Men and Women ❀

By many benedictions — sun's  
And moon's and evening star's at  
once —

And so, you, looking and loving best,  
Conscious grew, your passion drew  
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too  
Down on you, near and yet more near,  
Till flesh must fade for heaven was  
here! —

Thus leant she and lingered — joy and  
fear!

Thus lay she a moment on my  
breast.

### IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul  
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped  
scroll

Freshening and fluttering in the wind.  
Past hopes already lay behind.

## **✻ Men and Women**

**What need to strive with a life  
awry ?**

**Had I said that, had I done this,  
So might I gain, so might I miss.  
Might she have loved me ? just as well  
She might have hated, — who can tell ?  
Where had I been now if the worst  
befell ?**

**And here we are riding, she and I.**

### **v.**

**Fail I alone, in words and deeds ?  
Why, all men strive and who succeeds ?  
We rode ; it seemed my spirit flew,  
Saw other regions, cities new,  
As the world rushed by on either  
side.**

**I thought, All labour, yet no less  
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.  
Look at the end of work, contrast**



## Men and Women ✱

The petty Done, the Undone vast,  
This present of theirs with the hopeful  
past !

I hoped she would love me. Here  
we ride.

### VL

What hand and brain went ever  
paired ?

What heart alike conceived and dared ?  
What act proved all its thought had  
been ?

What will but felt the fleshly screen ?  
We ride and I see her bosom heave.  
There's many a crown for who can  
reach.

Ten lines, a statesman's life in each !  
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,  
A soldier's doing ! what atones ?

## **\* Men and Women**

**They scratch his name on the Abbey  
stones.**

**My riding is better, by their leave.**

### **VII.**

**What does it all mean, poet ? well,  
Your brain's beat into rhythm — you  
tell**

**What we felt only ; you expressed  
You hold things beautiful the best,  
And pace them in rhyme so, side by  
side,**

**'Tis something, nay 'tis much — but  
then,**

**Have you yourself what's best for  
men ?**

**Are you — poor, sick, old ere your  
time —**

**Nearer one whit your own sublime**

## Men and Women ❀

Than we who never have turned a  
rhyme?

Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I  
ride.

### VIII.

And you, great sculptor — so you gave  
A score of years to art, her slave,  
And that's your Venus — whence we  
turn

To yonder girl that fords the burn!

You acquiesce and shall I repine?

What, man of music, you, grown gray  
With notes and nothing else to say,  
Is this your sole praise from a friend,  
“Greatly his opera's strains intend,  
But in music we know how fashions  
end!”

I gave my youth — but we ride, in  
fine.

## **\* Men and Women**

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### **IX.**

**Who knows what's fit for us ? Had fate  
Proposed bliss here should sublimate  
My being ; had I signed the bond —  
Still one must lead some life beyond,  
— Have a bliss to die with, dim-  
descried.**

**This foot once planted on the goal,  
This glory-garland round my soul,  
Could I descry such ? Try and test !  
I sink back shuddering from the quest —  
Earth being so good, would Heaven  
seem best ?**

**Now, Heaven and she are beyond  
this ride.**

### **X.**

**And yet — she has not spoke so long !  
What if Heaven be, that, fair and  
strong**

## Men and Women ❀

At life's best, with our eyes upturned  
Whither life's flower is first discerned,

    We, fixed so, ever should so abide ?

What if we still ride on, we two,

With life for ever old yet new,

Changed not in kind but in degree,

The instant made eternity, —

And Heaven just prove that I and she

    Ride, ride together, for ever ride ?

## IN THREE DAYS

[*A Dramatic Lyric*]

### I.

So, I shall see her in three days  
And just one night, but nights are short,  
Then two long hours, and that is morn.  
See how I come, unchanged, unworn —  
Feel, where my life broke off from  
    thine,  
How fresh the splinters keep and  
    fine, —  
Only a touch and we combine !

### II.

Too long, this time of year, the days !  
But nights — at least the nights are  
    short.

## Men and Women ❀

As night shows where her one moon  
is,  
A hand's-breadth of pure light and  
bliss,  
So, life's night gives my lady birth  
And my eyes hold her! what is worth  
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth?

### III.

O loaded curls, release your store  
Of warmth and scent as once before  
The tingling hair did, lights and darks  
Out-breaking into fairy sparks  
When under curl and curl I pried  
After the warmth and scent inside  
Thro' lights and darks how manifold —  
The dark inspired, the light controlled!  
As early Art embrowned the gold.

## **✻ Men and Women**

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### **IV.**

**What great fear — should one say,  
“Three days,  
That change the world, might change  
as well**

**Your fortune; and if joy delays,  
Be happy that no worse befell.”**

**What small fear — if another says,  
“Three days and one short night  
beside**

**May throw no shadow on your ways;  
But years must teem with change un-  
tried,**

**With chance not easily defied,  
With an end somewhere undescried.”**

**No fear! — or if a fear be born  
This minute, it dies out in scorn.  
Fear? I shall see her in three days  
And one night, now the nights are short,  
Then just two hours, and that is morn.**



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